

News monitored for: New Zealand Tourism Board

Wine, art and wilderness one would think makes for strange bedfellows. But everything in Nelson is strange — it's greens give a new definition to the colour of foliage, its oceans are just so stunningly aquamarine that you feel they are artificial, their wineries are so quaint that they look like homes you were deprived of in your childhood and its art is so outrageous, or should one say imaginative, that the blast of colours and the innovation tend to take your breath away — not just on canvas, also on glass.

Combining all these three tenets of tourism is what Nelson sells as a package all its own, very becoming, very odd and yet very engaging. It does come with a huge spend but as the expert and interactive tour guide with years of experience in all the three fields takes you through this enervating journey of sheer indulgence, you feel the need to know more.

Starting with art, the lady at the WOW studio (Wearable Art) at Nelson's clear and clean nook, takes you into the display studio, you are in for a double take. Of course, there is no question of ever wearing the clothes and designs on display, it is the imagination quotient that takes you in. These are

Wine, art, wildreness & WOW Nelson

Nowhere in the world will you find, within a short distance, three spectacular national parks, glistening golden beaches and turquoise crystal clear waters, alongside alpine meadows and snowy mountain ranges hanging over the Antarctic Circle but with cool weather. MEENAKSHI RAO takes you through this amazing geography

fresh from the stock designers from all over the world, including India which had 12 entries last year for the great WOW show that takes place in Wellington every September. And they have been given the licence to run amok with their ideas, fabric and designs.

Who would otherwise think of a pumpkin bra or a pistol cup covering your breasts and pointing towards anyone who dares to face you even for a simple conversation. Designers have used everything from common fabric to bamboo to PVC to environmental friendly clothing to let you know their inventions.

The show has grown from 18k views to 8,40,000 in just two years and that's a great jump. At Nelson, the current collection of outrageous imagination moves around on electronically mounted mannequins. Under



dim blue lights it is an experience to be with.

The wow element is not just in the clothes they would like you to wear but also in the wines that they would want you to spend your evenings with. Now, NZ has long and widespread stretches of vineries and most of them are family-owned small businesses catering more to their specific regions than internationally.

Like all small holdings, the ones in Nelson are quaint and sprawl over green and gentle mounds casked by the deep blue Tasman sea on one side and the deep blue Tasman sea on the other. Most of these come with tasting stations and a fresh produce cafe to match your wines just in case you need to take a langorous lunch in the midst of vines stretching below and the sun shining over the wooden huts with glass window sills.

A well curated tour will first drive you down to the Abel National Park crossing through heavily loaded green, golden and red apple orchards and plum stations. You will be lucky if the all-knowledge-all-entertainment man Noel Kennedy (<http://www.wincoastandwilderness.co.nz/>) drives you through this perennial stretch of paradise. He tells you all about the greens, cooks a wine and food fusion lunch for you and if you have time, gives you the biggest surprise of the day — he makes you hold the real Lord of the Rings ring in your bare hands at the jeweller's who designed it for the big Hollywood series.

Nelson is a quiet nook at this time of the season but that's what therapy is all about — silent, untouched, virgin and stimulating. Take a break from the usual, go to Nelson which incidentally has one of the best mountain biking trails in the world. Go stay at the luxury lodge Edenhouse run by Peter and Bobbie Martin if you can afford it. Lesser money but an entirely home-coming experience option would be the Wakefield Quay House. Not just the totally engaging hosts Woody & Jonnie Moore but also the location (on a hilltop looking down the bay) will make it worth your stay in this quaint nook of New Zealand.